THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • WEDNESDAY • MAY 26, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 18 • LATE CITY EDITION

30 PERCENT

DROP IN CASELOAD IN THE PAST 10 DAYS

NATION WIDE	MAY 24	MAY 25
Fresh cases	2,22,315	1,96,427
Recoveries	3,02,544	3,25,850
Deaths	4,454	3,511

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

May 24: **23,65,395 doses**

May 25: **18,77,419 doses**

TOTAL DOSES: 20,04,94,991

DAILY COVID CASES GO BELOW 2 LAKH, LOWEST IN A MONTH

Single-day rise in new Covid infections fell to the lowest level in 41 days on Tuesday, according to Union Health Ministry data

DAILY TEST POSITIVITY RATE ,TOO, COMES DOWN

A total of 1,96,427 new coronavirus infections were reported in the past 24 hours, while the toll tally climbed to 3,07,231 with 3,511 fresh fatalities – the lowest in 21 days, the data updated at Tuesday 8 am showed. India had registered 1,84,372 new cases on April 14. In another positive note, the daily test positivity rate came down to under 10% to settle at 9.54%

CASES DOWN IN DELHI, BUT UP IN T.N., N-E

- Data show that active caseload in six states, including Delhi, has come down by half since mid-May. However, in Tamil Nadu and some north-eastern states, cases seem to be going up
- The Union health ministry said cumulatively, the active caseload in India has now come down to 25,86,782 | P9

1,84,372

FRESH CASES WERE REPORTED ON APRIL 14, THE PREVIOUS LOWEST POINT

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Black fungus: CM for new discharge protocol

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Covid discharge protocol should be changed to include mucormycosis or black fungus checks for patients with inputs from ENT specialists, insisted Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Tuesday, during a meeting with officials and ministers to review the pandemic situation.

With black fungus cases on the rise in the State, health department officials were told to ensure that all hospitals treating Covid patients follow a revised protocol that includes testing, treatment and prevention of the fungal infection.

"Now that we know how mucormycosis is caused, prepare a discharge protocol that will include preventive measures as well as treatment. Discuss with ENT specialists and include their suggestions, and ensure all hospitals follow this protocol to prevent the spread of black fungus," he told officials and ministers.

KARNATAKA	MAY 24	MAY 25
Fresh cases	25,311	22,758
Recoveries	57,333	38,224
Deaths	529	588

The Karnataka Health Department on May 18 issued an advisory to Covid patients being discharged to report symptoms of mucormycosis. "Patients are advised to strictly control diabetes mellitus and report any of the following symptoms: Facial pain/cheek pain, bloody and foul smelling nasal discharge, nasal stuffiness and eye symptoms like eyelid edema, redness in the eye, any visual disturbance." Yediyurappa said the advisory should be turned into a revised protocol. The lockdown has brought down cases in urban areas. Similar curbs should be enforced in rural areas, he said. "There should be no home isolation in villages and all patients must be shifted to CCCs," he added.

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa reviews the new Metro line, which extends from Mysuru Road to Kengeri Metro Station, on Phase-II of the Namma Metro project, in Bengaluru on Tuesday | ASHISHKRISHNA HP | P2

TESTING TIMES

PU-II exams in July, dates yet to be fixed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Second PU examinations will be held in July this year, but the exact dates are yet to be worked out, said Pre-University Education Department Director Snehal R said on Tuesday. The exam pattern and timetable too will be decided after discussion and announced later, she said. The PU department requires around 75 days to schedule, conduct and announce the exam results, she said.

At a meeting of education ministers of various states on May 23, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had suggested conducting exams only for major subjects.

But Snehal said that changing the format for PU exams now would be difficult as pre-exam work has been completed. "Students will be put under tremendous stress if the pattern is changed now," she said.

She appealed to departments concerned to hold all-India entrance exams for professional courses only after CBSE Class 12 exams, which are scheduled between July 15 and August 26 this year. By that time, the Second PU exams too should be completed to help students appear for competitive exams.

EXPRESS READ

Subodh Kumar Jaiswal appointed CBI Director

New Delhi: Senior IPS officer Subodh Kumar Jaiswal was on Tuesday appointed as the new CBI Director for two years, according to a Personnel Ministry order. A 1985-batch IPS officer of the Maharashtra cadre, he is currently the DG of the CISF. P10

Sizing up economy stress

HDFC Bank flags likely retail loan repayment defaults

SESA SEN @ New Delhi

WITH the pandemic still raging and no end in sight for the common man's economic distress, banks are bracing for an era of retail loan defaults.

Retail loans, which dominated the Covid restructuring of most private banks in 2020-21, are likely to see higher delinquencies as borrowers are busy fighting the impact of the second wave of infections, Sashidhar Jagdishan, CEO and MD of HDFC Bank, said on Tuesday.

Borrowers who had to avail cover under regulatory dispensations like moratorium and restructuring after the first Covid wave are more likely to default, the CEO said, implying that the lender will be "cautious" in these extraordinary times. HDFC Bank already saw an uptick in cheque bounce rates in April.

Talking to investors in a call hosted by Macquarie Research, Jagdishan said that the second Covid wave hitting the rural areas will have an impact on both business momentum and recovery.

As on March 31, the bank restructured total loans worth ₹6,508.37 crore comprising 3.36 lakh accounts under the Reserve Bank's one-time scheme. Of this, 2.87 lakh accounts were for retail loans amounting to ₹5,456 crore or 92.5 per cent. Corporate borrowers have largely stayed away from restructuring their dues. The trend is similar for other private banks, too. Total restructuring by Axis Bank amounted to ₹844.6 crore, of which retail loans accounted for ₹503.71 crore as on March 31. Similarly, Kotak Mahindra Bank restructured loans worth ₹121.5 crore, of which ₹82.38 crore consisted of retail loans.

ICICI Bank and Yes Bank were outliers that saw more corporate loan recast.

In the face of uncertainty, people saving every penny

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

INDIANs have salted away a neat ₹1 lakh crore in bank deposits in just three fortnights of the current fiscal (FY22). Interest rates are literally nailed to the floorboards, so the big money flowing into banks, experts caution, could be a sign of rising household stress.

It's an unusual increase for the months of April and May, and with lockdowns in force, some believe it's a sign of precautionary savings, compounded by the need to hold disposable cash to counter health and economic uncertainties. Typically, bank deposits and credit offtake decline in April and May. But, FY21 bucked the trend with deposits rising by a staggering ₹2.8 lakh crore in the first three fortnights.

Now, FY22 is a torchbearer, with customers saving much more this fiscal, but whether this will have a significant salutary impact on consumption spending is unclear. As an OECD paper underscored last December, lockdowns in several countries strengthened motives for precautionary saving among households, discouraging investment and purchases of durable goods.

CONTINUED ON: P12

THE BIG CHANGE

	Deposits (₹ crore)	Credits (₹ crore)
FY18	-1,75,73	-2,50,525
FY19	-88,297	-1,04,780
FY20	-56,379	-1,46,966
FY21	2,82,876	-1,19,028
FY22	1,03,334	-80,025
1st fortnight	1,01,357	-60,333
2nd fortnight	-80,579	-28,783
3rd fortnight	82,555	9,091

Source: RBI, SBI Research

Intense political buzz ahead of cabinet meet

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

THERE has been an intense political activity in the state since Saturday with prominent leaders rushing off to Delhi and some top ministers holding a hush-hush meeting.

Minor Irrigation Minister CP Yogeshwara who visits New Delhi regularly to meet the party central leadership was on Monday night accompanied by party MLA Arvind Bellad, who is considered an upcoming leader.

Though Yogeshwara and Bellad, who represents the Hubli-Dharwad South constituency, could not meet any of the top leaders, they spoke to Karnataka in-charge Arun Singh over phone, party sources told *The New Indian Express*.

It is discussed within party circles that Bellad, a LIngayat leader, is one of the top names doing the rounds for the chief minister's post if there is a vacancy at the top.

It was said that Mines and Geology Minister Murugesh Nirani too was expected to head to Delhi, but the visit was cancelled at the last minute. The sudden intense activity, coming ahead of the cabinet meeting on Thursday, has raised many eyebrows within BJP circles.

What set off the buzz was the meeting in Hubballi on Saturday. Union minister Pralhad Joshi, who too is said to be in the race for the CM's post, met ministers Dr K Sudhakar, Byrathi Basavraj and former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, who were instrumental in bringing BJP to power.

Sudhakar, who was visiting Tumakuru, later headed to Chitradurga, where he was joined by Byrathi Basavraj. The duo then went to Shiggaon, Haveri to meet Home Minister Basavraj Bommai and PWD Minister CM Udasi. The four met over dinner. But more interesting was the breakfast meeting the next morning in Hubballi where Pralhad Joshi joined them.

PROTECTIVE CHAIN

The axle of a train being chained at the Shalimar Station in Howrah to save it from cyclone Yaas, on Tuesday. The cyclone will make landfall on Wednesday | BISWAJEET BANERJEE

Phase 3 trial of new Covid drug at Apollo, elsewhere

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

PHASE 3 clinical trials in nearly 2,400 people in India have begun to test the efficacy of experimental antiviral drug Molnupiravir against Covid-19, following regulatory approvals by the Central Drug Standard Control Organisation.

This drug, developed by Merck originally, is an oral broad spectrum antiviral agent that has shown promise in treating mild and moderate Covid cases in early-stage trials in some countries.

In India, five companies have entered into voluntary licensing agreements to produce generic versions of it. And MSN laboratories has received permission to conduct the trials.

Dr Suneetha Narreddy, senior consultant, infectious diseases, at Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad, which is one of the 40 sites in India where the phase 3 trials will be held, said that the drug is showing promise.

"Data from early stage trials and preliminary analysis of phase 3 trials from outside India looks very promising but we should wait till the trials are concluded in India to say something definitive," she said, adding it is being given to non-hospitalised patients with mild and moderate disease. "Final analysis will depend on how many of the patients with or without this drug in the placebo and treatment arm go on to develop severe disease or needed hospitalisation," she said.

SECURITY COVER

Why this BJP MLA can't afford protection of central forces

PRONAB MONDAL @ Kolkata

FOR Chandana Bauri, BJP's MLA in Saltora, West Bengal, defeating the TMC candidate in the recent Assembly elections was easier than bowing to her party's decision to provide all BJP Bengal legislators with central force personnel security cover.

Chandana, the wife of a daily wage earner, found it impossible to offer the four central force jawans, who were sent for her security, daily meals and make arrangements for accommodation for them.

The homemaker-turned-MLA's husband, who is jobless because of the lockdown, and her two children reside in a dilapidated single-room hut with tiled-roof without running water or even a toilet.

Touched by their protectee's plight, the jawans have started buying vegetables from local groceries using their own money and giving it to the MLA for arranging meals for them and her family as well.

Chandana bagged victory from Saltora defeating her contender, a TMC veteran in the area, by 4,145 votes.

"My husband is a mason. Our daily average earning is ₹400. Because of lockdown, the source of income has dried up. My husband and I are MGNREGA card holders," she said.

BJP MLA Chandana Bauri along with the central forces sent for her security by the party, in front of her dilapidated hut in Saltora, West Bengal

NARADA SCAM

The Supreme Court on Tuesday permitted the CBI to withdraw its appeal against the Calcutta High Court order allowing house arrest of four leaders, including three from TMC, in the Narada bribery case. P10